

# USAID Helps Modernize Education in Nicaragua

## Challenge

The average Nicaraguan has 4.6 years of schooling and only 2.1 in extremely poor rural areas. Nearly 500,000 children, aged three to twelve, remain outside the formal education system. Increasing access to quality, primary education for all Nicaraguan children is vital to the country's social and economic growth.



Photo: USAID/Jan Howard

Multi-grade teacher Leslie Ramirez lends a hand as students experiment with sound.

***“Academic performance and student behavior are much better because the children are involved in and take responsibility for their own learning.”***

***- Leslie Ramirez, schoolteacher***

## Results

USAID's assistance is helping change the way teachers teach, children learn, and how primary schools are run. According to statistics, and more importantly, testimonies of teachers, parents and students, the program is generating results. School completion in USAID-supported model schools exceeds that of non-model schools by over 20% and since the program began, academic achievement increased 8% in Spanish and 12% in math.

Parent participation in USAID model schools reached 96% in urban schools and 93% in rural schools during 2003. Under the model school program, democratic community participation in support of school quality became a distinguishing feature of primary education reform in Nicaragua. The success of USAID's model school program led to the Nicaraguan government scaling-up the model nationwide.

## Initiative

USAID's \$12.6 million basic education project is a long-term effort to improve primary education quality by promoting modern teaching methodologies and community support for schools.

The program is increasing emphasis on rural education, bilingual education in Nicaragua's Caribbean coast region, parent and community involvement, and educational statistics and applied research.

USAID educational reforms encourage innovative education with instruction designed to accommodate each student's style and learning pace. The model schools are located in every municipality of the country with the goals of improving access to quality education for the country's primary students, reducing the drop out rate, and increasing the number of students who complete 6th grade.